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SUBJECT: ANKARA MEDIA REACTION REPORT

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 19, 2007

In Today's Papers

Turkish Troops Launch Limited Cross Border Incursion into Iraq
All papers report that yesterday approximately 700 Turkish troops crossed five kilometers into northern Iraq. The operation came after receiving reports from US intelligence that the PKK terrorists were near the border area and were appeared to be planning to infiltrate into Turkey. In a statement Tuesday, the Turkish General Staff (TGS) said a heavy blow was dealt on a group of terrorists trying to cross the Turkish-Iraqi border. The statement also rejected news that "originated from north of Iraq" which argued that 10 villages were bombed and a woman was killed. "It is obvious that hundreds of civilians would have been killed if the villages had been targeted. Such allegations only serve the terrorist PKK as the Turkish military demonstrated its affection for the people in north of Iraq in the past."

Prime Minister Erdogan said the Turkish military would continue operations against the PKK. "Our security forces will continue to do whatever is necessary," Erdogan told a news conference yesterday.

President Abdullah Gul, when discussing the cross-border operations, said "we did what was necessary... We are targeting only the terrorist organization."

The government of Iraq's Kurdish region condemned the cross-border incursion of Turkish troops. "We condemn this incursion. Turkey wants to transfer the PKK problem onto the territory of Iraqi Kurdistan," said Fuad Hussein, head of the office of Kurdish regional president Massoud Barzani. Hussein stressed that the Peshmerge forces had been ordered to defend the sovereignty of the Kurdistan region and its people if the forces cause damage to the villages.

Papers say the Kurdish region regional president Massoud Barzani cancelled his meeting with US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice in order to protest against the Turkish attacks on the Kurdish region. Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani told reporters "there was supposed

to be a meeting between Rice and Barzani in Baghdad, but because of the US position regarding the Turkish attacks, he preferred not to go."

Rice, speaking later at a news conference with Iraqi Foreign Minister Hoshyar Zebari, said "Turkey, Iraq and the US had a common interest in stopping the activities of the PKK." Rice is also quoted as warning against actions which would destabilize the north of Iraq. Zebari said his country understands the "legitimate security concerns of Turkey," emphasizing it would be better "if Iraq, Turkey and the US work together on a plan to eliminate the PKK."

Papers also quote US Ambassador Ross Wilson as saying at a reception Tuesday that the US exerts all efforts to provide Turkey with "effective information" and "instant intelligence." He also emphasized that the intelligence sharing between the US and Turkey would continue.

Editorial Commentary on Turkish Operations into northern Iraq
Sami Kohen observed in the mainstream daily Milliyet: (12/19): "The Turkish operation carried the risk of the opening a new front in the war in Iraq. Despite this risk, the Bush administration made a difficult choice in the favor of Turkey. American strategic interests played a part in Washington's decision-making mechanism because the US does not want to lose Turkey as an ally. On the other hand, Washington does not want to see the emergence of a new conflict in northern Iraq. Finally, Washington does not want to see anti-Americanism in the northern Iraqi administration or among Iraqi Kurds. The surprise visit of Secretary Rice to Kirkuk and Baghdad is part of the US effort to maintain the delicate diplomatic balances. It will be interesting to see the extent to which the US can control reaction from Baghdad and the regional Kurdish

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administration. Barzani's language indicates that he has returned to his harsh rhetoric. Barzani, with Washington's persuasion, used to be moderate, but now he is playing tough. I wonder if and when he is going to realize that good relations with Turkey are in his interest."

Gungor Mengi commented in mainstream daily Vatan (12/19): "Turkey's cross border operation has brought both military and political results. However, given the current situation, political results are more important than military results. The US used to suffer from a negative image in Turkey because Turks thought America pursued a deliberate policy to protect PKK camps in northern Iraq. In addition, the Armenian genocide resolution in the Congress caused a lot of negative reaction. Finally, Turks felt Barzani's arrogance was fueled by US support for his administration. Meanwhile, the US continued to suggest that Turkey solve the PKK problem through politicization, a suggestion which the Turks felt lacked common sense. In fact, the US has turned a blind eye to the PKK for years.

Fortunately, the US administration realized its mistake. Now Washington is acting with common sense and is illustrating zero tolerance against terrorism. With this attitude, we can hope for a secure and just future. The more the US acts with common sense on this issue, the more the US will gain the hearts and minds of the Turkish people."

Imam Counsels Assailant

Islamist-oriented Yeni Safak reports Ramazan Bay, the youth who stabbed Roman Catholic Priest Adriano Franchini after the on Sunday mass in Izmir, fled to a nearby mosque after the attack. The Imam of the mosque, after hearing Bay's confession that he regretted stabbing the priest, convinced him to hand himself over to police. On the other hand, Priest Franchini reportedly said the assailant Bay has psychological problems. The paper says Bay has criminal records in police.

Noted Pianist Warns against the Rise of Islam in Turkey
Hurriyet, Vatan, Cumhuriyet and Radikal report world-famous Turkish pianist Fazil Say told a German daily last week, "Islamists have gained power in Turkey. All the ministers' wives wear headscarves. We are a minority now, I might leave Turkey." Say's remarks drew mixed reactions from the ruling AKP government members as well as

intellectuals and the media. Professor Turkan Saylan, the head of the Association for Supporting Modern Life, said they share the concerns of pianist Fazil Say about the rise of Islamism in Turkey. Several other intellectuals said Say revealed concerns shared by the whole country.

Meanwhile, the Turkish Education Ministry filed a lawsuit seeking compensation from pianist Fazil Say, who sparked a heated controversy by saying that Islam was on the rise in Turkey, and that the AKP government was gradually lifting music and painting education in school. Say had blamed the Education Ministry for blocking the appointment of new music teachers.

TV Highlights

NTV

Domestic News

- Nurettin Demirtas, leader of the pro-Kurdish DTP, has been arrested by the military court for falsifying his medical report in order to evade military service. Former DTP leader Ahmet Turk told a news conference Demirtas' arrest was unlawful and politically motivated.

- Turkish security forces have found six PKK shelters in the southeastern province of Bingol and seized more than 50 kg of C-4 explosives.

- Eurobarometer's Fall Survey says Turkish support for EU accession

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declined from 54 to 49 percent over the last year. In Turkish Cyprus, popular support for EU membership declined, for the first time, from 54 to 47 percent over the same period.

International News

- The Israeli parliament has approved a law allowing the police to establish a huge database based on citizens' telephone numbers.

- President Bush will embark on a nine-day tour of the Middle East next month.

- Iranian President Ahmadinejad completed the Hajj, the annual Muslim pilgrimage, in Saudi Arabia.

WILSON